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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VILNIUS 000501

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SUBJECT: VISIT OF SPECIAL ENVOY CHRISTIAN KENNEDY: GOL
STILL FUMBLING WITH JEWISH ISSUES

REF: VILNIUS 479 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador John A. Cloud for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Ambassador Christian Kennedy, Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, visited Lithuania June 19-20 and met with members of the Jewish community and GOL officials. He found that, despite the upcoming visit of PM Kirkilas to Washington and resolutions pending in the U.S. Congress critical of the GOL's handling of Jewish issues, the GOL seems to have no sense of urgency to solve them, and can report only the most modest progress on one of them. The GOL had no good news to share on communal property restitution or investigations of anti-Nazi partisans. End summary.

Snipiskes Cemetery

12. (C) Adviser to President Adamkus Lauras Bielinis told Kennedy that the President has told the PM several times to resolve the Snipiskes cemetery issue quickly and thoroughly. Bielinis said that a geophysical study of the cemetery would begin soon and the President would support the findings of that study. (Note: The study began on June 25.) Simon Gurevicius, Executive Director of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, expressed optimism that the cemetery issue would be resolved in a positive way, in large part due to the approach of the private developer, Ukio Bank Investment Group, that owns the undeveloped portion of the cemetery. Kennedy stressed to all of his GOL interlocutors that the cemetery and property restitution were issues of shared values among allies.

Communal Property Restitution

13. (C) Prime Minister's adviser on Jewish issues, Vilius Kavaliauskas, told Kennedy that the Ministry of Justice had submitted to the Government draft amendments to the religious law regarding communal property restitution on June 18. The next step forward would be for the Government to review the amendments and submit them to Parliament. Kavaliauskas noted, however, that there are still some "technical details to sort out." Moreover, although the amendments could be ready "within a few weeks," a "realistic time frame for parliamentary consideration would be October or November," after the October 12 Parliamentary elections. Faina Kukliansky, attorney and Deputy Chair of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, was very pessimistic about the GOL's efforts to address communal property restitution. She noted that the amendments had bounced back and forth between the MOJ and the Government numerous times and the GOL has promised several times to submit the amendments to the Parliament, but has never done so. She added that private property restitution has also been nearly impossible for Jews because most Jews were killed in the Holocaust. For those who survived, private restitution requires Lithuanian citizenship and Jews who emigrated from Lithuania lost their citizenship in many cases. MP Emmanuelis Zingeris stressed to Kennedy that restitution should be linked explicitly with

cultural issues, including the preservation and memorialization of Lithuania's rich Jewish heritage. He had, however, no practical suggestions on how to establish these linkages.

Investigation of anti-Nazi Partisans

14. (C) Zingeris told Kennedy that, at his request, the State Security Department (VSD) analyzed the impacts of the lingering investigation of the Prosecutor's office into anti-Nazi partisan Yitzhak Arad (Israeli General and former head of Yad Vashem). According to Zingeris, VSD reported to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister that the case could isolate Lithuania and increase the international perception of Lithuania as a "non-pluralist" country. Zingeris alleged that the Arad case was the result of pressure from the Government's Genocide Center and others, who were "furious" at Arad for his cooperation with DOJ's investigation of the role of some Lithuanians who allegedly collaborated with the Nazis. (Note: The Genocide Center is a GOL institute that focuses mostly on crimes of the Soviet regime.) Bielinis and Kavaliauskas both assured Kennedy that the investigations of Arad and other anti-Nazi partisans would not go anywhere. Bielinis pointed out that President Adamkus spoke publicly against the Arad investigation when it first arose.

Comment

15. (C) The GOL's failure to address, much less resolve, these three issues was on full display during Kennedy's

VILNIUS 00000501 002 OF 002

visit. GOL officials exhibited a sense of resignation or denial about ways forward. Post will continue to work closely with EUR/OHI on these issues and will continue to press the GOL to take concrete and timely steps forward.
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